

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-11

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 DOTE-00 FMC-04

CG-00 COA-02 DLOS-07 SWF-02 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-07

PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OC-06 CCO-00 OPR-02

A-01 M-02 MC-02 DRC-01 CIEP-03 FRB-03 OMB-01 TRSE-00

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R 190400Z SEP 74

FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8363

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL LAHORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, ELAB, PK

SUBJECT: PARTIAL KARACHI PORT STRIKE CONTINUES

REF: KARACHI 1842

ANKARA FOR RLO

SUMMARY: THE STRIKE BY SOME EMPLOYEES OF THE KARACHI PORT TRUST (KPT) CONTINUES, BUT KPT ASSERTIONS THAT MANY WORKERS HAVE RETURNED TO DUTY AND THAT PORT OPERATIONS ARE NOW NEARLY BACK TO NORMAL SEEM TRUE. THE UNION HAS MADE FREQUENT CLAIMS OF PERSECUTION AND HAS REFUSED TO ATTEND ADJUDICATION HEARINGS. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE URGED THAT WORK BE RESUMED AND HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAKEN A STIFF LINE WITH THE UNION. IF THE STRIKE IS NOT SOON

SETTLED, OTHER UNIONS MAYJOIN IN A ONE-DAY "SOLIDARITY" WORK STOPPAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE STRIKE OF WHITE-COLLAR AND SOME SKILLED WORKERS BELONGING TO THE ORGANIZATION OF KPT WORKERS (OKPTW) BEGUN SEPTEMBER 10 (REFTEL) IS NOW RPT NOW IN ITS SECOND WEEK WITH NO INDICATION THAT POSITIONS ON EITHER SIDE HAVE SOFTENED. THE PUBLIC SECTOR KPT CLAIMS THAT ABOUT 2,800 OF THE 10,000 OKPTW EMPLOYEES WHO INITIALLY JOINED THE STRIKE HAVE RETURNED TO WORK.(KPT HAS ALSO HIRED 3,000 PRESUMABLY NON-UNION WORKERS. ALL EXPORT COMMITMENTS ARE BEING MET, KPT AVERS, AND ITS CLAIMS OF TONNAGES WORKED AND SHIPS ENTERING AND LEAVING INDICATE CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF SHIPS WAITING OUTSIDE THE PORT HAS INCREASED. ACCORDING TO KPT SOURCES, ALL CRANE OPERATORS HAVE RETURNED TO WORK; ONLY THE CLERICAL STAFF HAS STAYED OUT. THE COAST GUARD HAS TAKEN OVER FROM THE STRIKING SECURITY STAFF. KPT HAS PUBLISHED NOTICES TO THE EFFECT THAT THOSE WORKERS REMAINING OUT WILL BE DISCIPLINED, NOTABLY BY LOSING SOME SENIORITY.

2. THE OKPTW HAS COMPLAINED THAT THE AUTHORITIES, AT THE INSTIGATION OF KPT OFFICIALS, ARE HARASSING AND PERSECUTING STRIKING EMPLOYEES. THE OKPTW HAS ALLEGED THAT OVER 900 STRIKERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. UNION LEADERS DETAINED UNDER THE DEFENSE OF PAKISTAN RULES HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN JAILED NEAR HYDERABAD. THE OKPTW HAS PUBLICLY APPEALED TO PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO TO INTERVENE TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE AMICABLY. THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (PNFTU) HAS ALSO ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVENTION AND HAS THREATENED A ONE-DAY TOKEN GENERAL STRIKE IF MATTERS ARE NOT RESOLVED BY SEPTEMBER 23;

3. THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (NIRC), BEFORE WHICH OKPTW REPRESENTATIVES HAVE CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO APPEAR, ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 12 A LAST APPEAL TO THE JAILED UNION LEADERS TO APPEAR AT ITS HEARINGS, ORDERING THAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEIR RELEASE TO TESTIFY BE MADE. THE UNION LEADERS REFUSED. THE NIRC DECIDED TO ADJUDICATE WITHOUT OKPTW PARTICIPATION. HEARINGS BEGAN IN KARACHI SEPTEMBER 16 AND WERE ADJOURNED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 21 WHEN THEY WILL RESUME IN ISLAMABAD. THE ONLY STATED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS HOUSING ALLOWANCES OR QUARTERS; AGREEMENT HAD EARLIER BEEN REACHED ON 120 OF 122 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEMANDS.

4. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE REPEATEDLY URGED KPT EMPLOYEES TO RETURN TO WORK, OFTEN APPEALING TO THEIR PATRIOTIC SENTIMENTS. SIND CHIEF MINISTER JATOI STATED ON SEPTEMBER 13 THAT "SOME ACTION", POSSIBLY CANCELLING ITS REGISTRATION, WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THE OKPTW. FEDERAL LABOR MINISTER HANIF, TOURING THE PORT SEPTEMBER 16, REPORTEDLY CRITICIZED THE OKPTW FOR REFUSING TO

AVAIL ITSELF OF THE NIRC MACHINERY, SAID THE GOP WOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED NOR TOLERATE LAWLESSNESS, AND DESCRIBED UNION OFFICIALS AS "ANTI-NATIONAL" AND "DISRUPTIONIST". HE COMMENTED THAT THE OKPTW HAD EARLY DETERMINED ON A STRIKE NO MATTER WHAT CONCESSIONS THE KPT OFFERED.

5. COMMENT: AS OBSERVED BY CONGEN OFFICERS, THE PORT DOES NOW RPT NOW SEEM TO BE FUNCTIONING AT CLOSE TO NORMAL FOR THIS SLACK SEASON NOW THAT CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS OF WORKERS HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR JOBS, OR BEEN REPLACED. WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE RELUCTANCE OF THE OKPTW LEADERS TO APPEAR BEFORE THE NIRC STEMS FROM THEIR FEAR THAT SUCH APPEARANCE WOULD HIGHLIGHT THE ABOVE-AVERAGE WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF KPT WORKERS COMPARED TO THOSE OF OTHER EMPLOYEES IN THE ORGANIZED SECTOR. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE KPT SEEM DETERMINED TO DISCIPLINE THE OKPTW. THE STRONG LINE TAKEN THROUGHOUT THE STRIKE BY PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS TO SUPPORT LAW AND ORDER, MAINTAIN PORT PRODUCTIVITY, AND UPHOLD THE ORDERLY ADJUDICATION OF LABOR DISPUTES THROUGH NIRC PROCEDURES IS CONSISTENT WITH GOP ATTITUDES TOWARD LABOR PROBLEMS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.
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